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Jury Acquits Ex-Agent in Plot to Kill Qaddafi Foe

WASHINGTON, March 5 (AP) — Edwin P. Wilson, the former Central Intelligence Agency operative, has been found not guilty of charges that he conspired to kill an opponent of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, but he still faces at least two more trials arising from his Libyan dealings.

He has been sentenced to a total of 32 years in prison on two earlier convictions. "This doesn't hurt our other cases at all," Assistant United States Attorney E. Lawrence Barcella Jr. said after the verdict was delivered Friday night by a Federal jury that deliberated for three hours.

Patrick Wall, a defense attorney, disagreed, saying, "I really don't know the impact, but it may be helpful for prospective jurors to read that he has been acquitted after having read earlier that he was convicted." Mr. Wall said his client told him after the verdict that he was "very pleased."

Basis of Federal Charge

Mr. Wilson was charged with conspiring to commit murder and solicitation to commit murder. Each charge carried a five-year prison term. Even though the intended victim was living in exile in Egypt at the time, it was a Federal case because, the Government said, the conspiracy was arranged and money changed hands in the United States.

"I wouldn't have been surprised had the verdict gone either way," Mr. Wall said, "but I was surprised at how quickly they came back. I figured if a jury came back that quickly, it wasn't a good sign."

He said he was disappointed but added, "Obviously, thus far in this series of cases involving Mr. Wilson, justice is being served, just not in its full measure."

Mr. Wilson was sentenced to 15 years

and fined \$200,000 by a Federal District Court in Alexandria, Va., in December for illegal arms deals with Libya. Last month in Houston, he received another 17 years and a \$145,000 fine for smuggling 21 tons of plastic explosive to Libya. He faces a second Washington trial on charges he ran a terrorist training school for Libya and a trial in New York on charges that he tried to hire someone to kill Mr. Barcella, another Federal prosecutor and seven witnesses against him.

In the case concluded Friday, dating to 1976, Mr. Wilson and Frank E. Terpil, who is believed living in Beirut, Lebanon, were accused of arranging a plot in a meeting in the Washington area to kill Umar Abdullah Muhayshi, a member of the ruling Libyan Revolutionary Council who defected to Egypt in 1975 after disagreements with Colonel Qaddafi.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Terpil were said to have offered \$1 million to Rafael Quintero, a Cuban refugee who, prosecutors said, brought two other Cuban refugees into the plot. It fell apart after the three talked with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Terpil in Geneva. The Cubans returned to the United States and told the C.I.A. about it.

Mr. Wall assailed Mr. Quintero's credibility. The sole defense witness was Kenneth Conklin, a former lawyer for Mr. Wilson, who said Mr. Quintero told him in 1980 that the scheme was not an assassination plot. Mr. Quintero said he could not recall meeting with Mr. Conklin.

"I suggest that Quintero didn't tell you the truth," Mr. Wall said in his closing argument. Referring to Mr. Quintero's past employment by the intelligence agency and his role in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, the lawyer said: "His job was to kill on orders. I suggest to you that if a man will kill, he'll lie."